



Indiana Department of Education

151 West Ohio Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Special Education Directors, Testing Coordinators

FROM: Anne Davis, Director of Special Education
Michele Walker, Director of Student Assessment

DATE: February 24, 2011

SUBJECT: Clarification of Appropriate Use of ISTAR and IMAST Assessments

The Department of Education has received requests for clarification about limitations on the use of ISTAR and IMAST.

There is no limit on the number of students who may take the Indiana Modified Achievement Standards Test (IMAST) and the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR). The student's Case Conference Committee is responsible for determining whether the student participates in ISTEP+ or in an alternate assessment (IMAST or ISTAR). The Department of Education expects schools to administer the most appropriate assessment. Information about the criteria for participation in each of these assessments is available in the ISTEP Program Manual and other information available at <http://www.doe.in.gov/assessment/>.

For purposes of AYP, only three percent (3%) of the students in assessed grade levels (Grades 3 – 8 and 10) may be counted as proficient based on combined ISTAR and IMAST results¹. The calculation is made separately for English and mathematics because students may take different assessments in different subjects—for example, ISTEP+ in mathematics and IMAST in English.

The limit is applied at the corporation level. If a school corporation exceeds the limit, the corporation has the following options:

- (1) If the corporation is the corporation of service for a special education cooperative, the corporation may file an appeal which proves that at least the number of students by which it exceeds the three percent (3%) limit reside in other school corporations.
- (2) If the corporation serves only its own special education students or exceeds the 3% limit based on its own students, the corporation must decide which of the ISTAR or IMAST “passing” students will count as “not passing” strictly for the purposes of calculating AYP. This change in

¹ The limit technically is expressed in two parts – one percent (1%) for ISTAR and two percent (2%) for IMAST; however federal guidelines allow schools that are under the limit on one test to exceed the limit on the other test so long as the total does not exceed three percent (3%).

status will change both the school and corporation data for the special education cells, the overall cells and any other cells in which the students are included. The change in status does not affect the actual scores of students, nor does it impact the reports containing students' scores.

- (3) If the corporation exceeds the cap because it serves a residential facility, the corporation may request a waiver of the one percent (1%) ISTAR limit. To the extent a waiver is granted, it raises the three percent (3%) percent total limit. Please note that the Department cannot waive the two percent (2%) IMAST limit.

Some school corporations apparently are considering a limit on the number of students who take ISTAR and IMAST. In addition to creating a potential violation of the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Indiana's Article 7, such a policy is counterproductive. If a student is eligible for ISTAR or IMAST and the Case Conference Committee determines it is the most appropriate assessment for a student, requiring the student to take ISTEP+ (a less valid assessment for that student) very well may result in failure. The student will be counted as "not proficient," and this will have the same effect as if the school corporation ultimately has to decide that the student will be counted as "not proficient" even though the student passed ISTAR or IMAST.

For purposes of state accountability under P.L. 221, there is no limit on the number of students who may be counted as proficient based on ISTAR and IMAST results. Every student who receives a passing score counts as passing.